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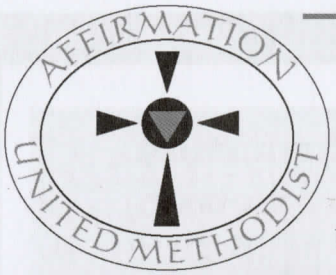

Affirmation

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR:
UNITED METHODISTS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUEER CONCERNS
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Affirmation Council Fall Meeting

By Tim Tennant-Jayne, Affirmation Co-Spokesperson

The Affirmation Council met this past October in the Chicago area for its semi-annual meeting. We covered a lot of topics in our discussions over the short 2 and a half day meeting. There was also a lot of Christmas card signing.

On the top of the agenda was a review of our witness at GC. Affirmation was OUT! at GC, seeking to educate the delegates about our lives and our faith. Overall we felt very good about the efforts of Affirmation, our members, the other organizations of our coalition (Reconciling Ministries Network and Methodist Federation for Social Action), and SoulForce. We watched the video record of the protest action which was held after the Conference discussion and votes.

Then we began looking ahead. Building off the discussion of the last General Conference was a look ahead to the next one in 2012. In preparation for this, the Council will meet this coming Spring in Tampa, Florida, the site of the 2012 General Conference. We also discussed our presence at the Reconciling Ministries Network

*(**Council Meeting**...Continued on page 2)*

Still Much To Do

By Affirmation Co-spokespersons Diane DeLap and Tim Tennant-Jayne

(Editors' note – Affirmation issued this press release shortly after the election.)

The 2008 elections are over. On the one hand, we all breathe a sigh of relief. No more attack ads. No more constant arguments over what candidate said what. Also, these elections do bring hope. There is hope for the future in the selection of a new President and in the ever-increasing number of elected officials who are openly queer. On the other hand, the 2008 elections gave us several setbacks in civil rights.

"Same-gender marriage" bans passed in Arizona, Florida, and most disappointingly, California where the status of thousands of same-gender marriages is now unknown. We say "same-gender marriage" in quotes because for us it's not "gay marriage" or "lesbian marriage." Also, the use of the term "one man and one woman" in most of the legislation ignores the many transgender and intersex citizens who are forced, under these statutes, to remain unmarried. Civil marriage should simply be the life commitment of one person to another. This is something fundamental and taken for granted by a large portion of our populace. In addition, a ban on adoptions by gay and lesbian couples and non-married heterosexual couples passed in Arkansas. Our country has, since its beginning, rejected the influence of religious opinions on civil law. The laws passed this week reflect a broadening influence of religious

*(**Still Much To Do**...Continued on page 2)*

(Council Meeting...Continued from page 1)
Convocation 2009. This will be in Estes Park, Colorado, September 4 – 7, 2009. We reviewed our budget.

We did not hold our Annual Meeting this past spring due to preparations for GC. We held the full membership meeting in October. Newly elected Council members are Lyn Ellis and Stephen Mallett. *(Editor's note – we'll have bios in the next newsletter.)* We also elected Lyn to the position of Co-Coordinator. Tim Tennant-Jayne was dragged into accepting (elected to) the position of Co-Spokesperson, along with Diane DeLap, who continues in this role.

Finally, we extend thanks to those who have left the Council, including David Meredith and Jim Palmquist for their service to Affirmation by serving on the Council. Jim's term came to its end while others are putting their energies into other ministries. We wish them all well.

(Still Much To Do...Continued from page 1)
fundamentalism on governments that could lead to far more serious issues in the future.

Even where marriage rights are achieved at the state level, same-gender couples still have to spend thousands of dollars on legal documents to achieve the over 1,000 federal protections any opposite-gender couple can get with a marriage license and a simple ceremony, either religious or civil. We tire of paying first class taxes for second class citizenship in a few states, third class citizenship in most of them.

There are those voices that claim this is just following biblical teachings. Yet the fundamentals of those teachings are our equality before a God who loves each of us as we are, wills the best for us, and urges us to treat one another as we wish to be treated. There are those voices that claim this is not the same as racial struggles for equal rights. The similarity is that we can no more change our sexual orientation or gender identity than others can change the color of their skin.

Affirmation will continue to work to open the hearts of The United Methodist Church so that one day "Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds" will become a reality. We will also work to rescind state and federal laws that relegate us to second- and third-class citizenship.

We rejoice in the support of the United Methodist congregations, conferences, pastors, members, and bishops in California who recognize the basic human and civil right of two people legally uniting their lives.

There is, unfortunately, even in 2008, still much to do.

Affirmation Newsletter

This Affirmation newsletter is a quarterly publication.
Only Affirmation's elected spokespersons may represent the official positions of this organization. Opinions here, signed or unsigned, are those of the writers, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Affirmation.
Articles for consideration for publication may be submitted to: AffirmationNewsletter_at_yahoogroups.com*

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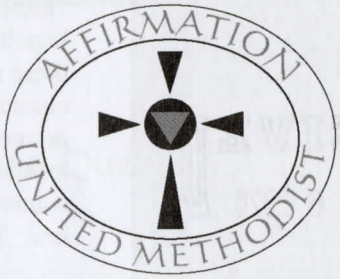
Mission Statement

As an independent voice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people, Affirmation radically reclaims the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ by relentlessly pursuing full inclusion in the Church as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community.

Adopted January 2005

*** Note: substitute the symbol "@" for the letters "_at_" in the email addresses.**



Transgender Day of Remembrance—November 20th, 2008

By Affirmation Co-spokespersons Diane DeLap and Tim Tennant-Jayne

(Editors' note—Affirmation issued this press release on November 12, 2008)

Last Sunday night someone shot Duanna Johnson to death. The police – the very people who pledge to "protect" all – ignored, or even worse, mistreated and abused her, like many of the victims of violence against transgender persons. In addition, many experience extraordinarily vicious brutality at the hands of their killers. According to TransgenderDOR.org, in the past year, over 20 individuals were murdered for being transgender. Over half of these deaths were in the United States.

And yet, The United Methodist Church remains silent. We rejoice that the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, TX did not demonize or exclude transgender and intersex persons. Yet we need our denomination to show positive support and encouragement for their transgender members and their families as they deal with the extraordinary circumstances of their gender identity. Only when the Church supports all of the downtrodden of society, like transgender people, will be fulfilling its obligation to "the least of these."

Ten years ago, on Nov. 28 1998, the murder of Rita Hester, a popular Boston transsexual, inspired over 250 of her friends to come together in a vigil of remembrance. A year later, on the anniversary of her death, San Francisco held a vigil in Rita's memory. The following year more cities joined in. This year, churches and organizations will hold hundreds of observances in dozens of countries.

This year services of remembrance are scheduled around Nov. 20 in at least ten countries and over 65 US communities. Affirmation supports these services and encourages its members and all progressive United Methodists to show their support by attending a service in their area. You can find a service in your area by referring to the following web site: http://www.transgenderdor.org/

Homicide Victim Identified as Transgendered Person, Duanna Johnson

Reported by: Jill Margetts, Contributor: Shane Myers Eyewitness News Memphis, USA

Nov.10, 2008

MEMPHIS, TN - Duanna Johnson was found shot to death in North Memphis, according to her lawyer.

Memphis police say it happened just before midnight at Hollywood near Staten Avenue, Sunday, November 9, 2008. According to detectives, when officers arrived at the scene, they found the body lying in the street. Police say a witness heard gunfire and then saw three people running away from the scene. Investigators do not have any suspects at this time.

Lawyer Murray Wells confirmed to Eyewitness News that the person who was killed is his client Duanna Johnson. He says Johnson was often in the area where she was killed. Murray says Johnson was trying to leave Memphis and go back to her hometown of Chicago. According to Murray, Johnson was just about homeless trying to live in Memphis. He says the apartment where Johnson was living did not have power. Murray says he was helping Johnson buy a bus ticket to Chicago.

Johnson was the subject of an alleged video taped beating that happened in June of 2008. Johnson, who had been arrested on a prostitution charge, said former Memphis Police Officer Bridges McRae beat her after making derogatory remarks about her sexuality. Johnson said another man, Officer J. Swain, held her down during the beating. Both officers were fired from the department.

Johnson was suing the city for $1.3 million.

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It's Tough Being Short

By Jan Olson, Affirmation Treasurer

There are difficulties with being short of stature but most people I know have found ways to get by and even embrace this characteristic. But what does one do when you're the treasurer of an organization and the fiscal year income comes up short of the fiscal year expenses? Ask for money, what else?

Affirmation's fiscal year 2007-2008 ended at the conclusion of General Conference at the beginning of May (the fiscal year usually runs from May 1 of a year to April 30 of the following year except when GC occurs and then it is extended to the ending date of GC). Our financial picture for the fiscal year has our expenses exceeding our income by around $3,000. (A financial report can be requested by email or through the P.O. Box). Luckily we had enough in reserve to cover this shortage so bills have been paid and the organization's work continues.

When I first starting looking at the income and expenses for the fiscal year I thought the shortfall was probably due to General Conference. I was surprised to find that was not the case. The expenses for GC, although much less than what was budgeted, did not exceed the income we received that was earmarked for GC. This is partly due to the many dedicated and generous members of Affirmation and our coalition partners who gave of their time and resources without requesting reimbursement for many of the expenses they incurred. Without these people we could not have been the significant presence at GC that we were and I'm grateful for them.

Undoubtedly, the financial crisis in our country and world has impacted the giving potential of our members. Affirmation donors gave money in response to our GC fundraisers rather than sending the GC donation on top of their usual contribution. Funds for membership were down for the last fiscal year. In the future it will be important for the financial management team to stress the importance of continuing regular giving even as we ask for special funding.

I do know the shortfall does not come from overspending or extravagance by the council members. I've seen council members who take a long bus ride to a council meeting instead of a more expensive flight, use their own money for office supplies, postage, telephone calls and other expenses, use personal rewards to pay for housing or flights to meetings and …the list could go on with ways council members save our organization money.

What's the good news in all this? A person short of stature does not have a way to add to their physical height. We, the members of Affirmation, can do something to alter our being short. Please consider an additional donation to Affirmation. How about a percentage (or all if you want to make a girl's dream come true) of an additional tax rebate being talked about by our president? How about donating frequent flyer miles to get our representative to the meeting with bishops as promised at GC or council members to important meetings throughout the year? How about donating your time and talent if you are good at grant–writing? How about forgoing a coffee or soda a week to have $5 or $10 dollars to send monthly? How about coming up with your own creative way to support this organization and share it with us? The way or amount you find to help is not the important part. What's important is that you help this organization continue being "an independent voice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people," and to "radically reclaim the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ by relentlessly pursuing full inclusion in the Church as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community."

Affirmation National Council

Diane DeLap, Co-spokesperson
Wilmington, MA
[redacted]

Lyn Ellis, Co-coordinator
Columbus, OH
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Stephen Mallett
Nashville TN
[redacted]

Rev. Tim Tennant-Jayne, Co-spokesperson
Minneapolis, MN
[redacted]

Two persons awaiting election at the next corporate meeting.

*** Note: substitute the symbol "@" for the letters "_at_" in the email addresses above.**

Book Review:

Unchristian: what a new generation really thinks about Christianity...and why it matters

By Gary Shephard

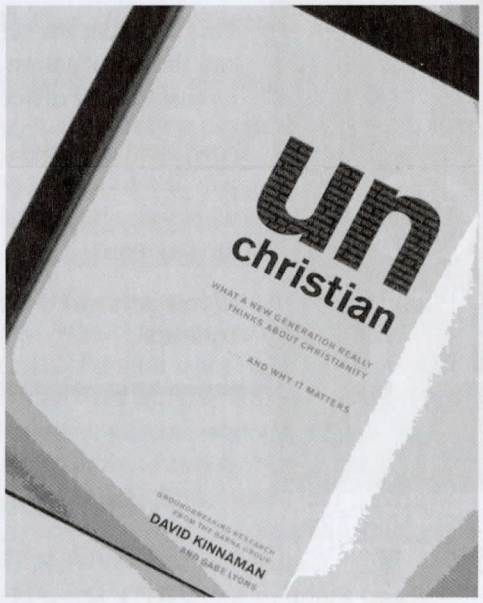
Unchristian is a bit of a shock. For the first time we see statistical backing for what a lot of us know but don't want to acknowledge. That we (the corporate we) often come across as hypocritical sheltered judgmental nut cases with a Get Saved! fixation. For those of us that have been in "the church" all of our lives, none of this is much of a surprise. Somehow, my generation, the generation ahead, and one generation behind manage to deal with this one way or another. The "missing" generation, those between UMYF and say about 30 view the church with a more critical eye and as such tend to walk away looking for spiritual fulfillment elsewhere.

Chapter 5 deals with the perception that the church is "Anti-homosexual." Well, duh. Those of us who have sat through three GCs in person know first hand that the UMC is on record as anti-homosexual. Those of us who've had to deal with local church officials that took it as their personal mission to "address the homosexual problem" and survived know the score.

> ***Chapter 5 deals with the perception that the church is "Anti-homosexual."***

There *is* a lot to recommend about Chapter 5. It calls for a sharp toning down of the rhetoric. It just doesn't go far enough though. It still considers us wrong and sinners.

That aside, there's a lot to recommend about the book. It does give a good insight into the mindset of young people and what we should be doing to reach out to them. Just don't let Chapter 5 get your blood pressure up.



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Updated Brochures Available

The Affirmation brochure has been updated post GC 2008. If you'd like to help spread the word about Affirmation, let us know. We'll print and mail you a few. Keep in mind printing time. The brochures take a fair amount of time to print. Send an email with "Brochures" in the subject line to: umaffirmation_at_yahoo.com or umaffirmationeadmn_at_prodigy.net

Or drop us a line at:

Affirmation
PO Box 1021
Evanston IL 60204-1021

Winter Gathering Postponed

We've postponed the Affirmation Winter Gathering, originally scheduled for late December, 2008. Because of the energy we put into our witness at GC, the council felt that there was neither sufficient time or resources to adequately plan and promote the event.

Post Office Box Still Open

Douglas Adams couldn't make up a story like this.

The post office closed our post office box for a few weeks. After much haggling and "We can't open your box back up, the system where we post the payment is down," we finally got the box opened back up.

It wasn't our fault. It really wasn't. A couple of years ago because of a change in who emptied the box, we no longer got the bill in time to pay it. That year, briefly, the box was closed and that time it *was* our fault. We set up calendar based alarms that go off in July telling us that the post office box rent is due.

This last year the rent was due at the same time our treasurer's father was in the hospital. She had the Affirmation checkbook with her, she looked up the rent on-line, and mailed the Evanston post office a check.

And what did the U. S. Postal Service do with the check? They lost it. Yup, they lost it. And the Evanston post office closed the box. Our treasurer drove over to Evanston to see what was up. And for days it was impossible to reopen the box because they couldn't post the payment.

If you got mail to us returned, rest assured, we do still exist, Evanston post office to the contrary.

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